

Safe Turkey Handling Key to Happy Holidays

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The holidays are in the air with the dropping temperatures and colder winds; and a holiday is not a holiday without turkey! Nothing can spoil festivities like food borne illness, so it is of utmost importance to thaw, cook, and store turkey safely.

The size of the turkey is important when it comes to proper thawing procedure. Allow 24 hours for every five pounds of turkey, and make sure to thaw the turkey in either a sink with cool water running over it, or in a refrigerator. It is never safe to thaw turkey on the counter top at room temperature. When storing the turkey in the refrigerator, it is safest to store it on the bottom shelf in its original bag so that the juices do not drip onto any other foods in the refrigerator.



After the turkey is safely thawed, it is time to think about safe cooking procedure. If preparation entails stuffing, it is important to stuff the turkey lightly so that all the contents of the turkey can be cooked thoroughly. For an un-stuffed turkey of 8-12 pounds, it is necessary to allow at least 2.75-3.0 hours of cook time. The turkey must reach an internal temperature of 165 degrees before it is safe to eat. For an 8-12 pound stuffed turkey, allow 3.0-3.5 hours.

Buffet style is often a popular way to serve during the holidays, but it is important that it be done safely. If the turkey is served buffet style, it is important that it be held at 140 degrees. After serving, the turkey should be cut or sliced into smaller pieces and stored in shallow pans. The turkey should be refrigerated immediately after it is served and should not be out at room temperature for longer than two hours.

Leftover turkey should be reheated to 165 degrees before being consumed, and turkey should be thrown away after four days.

For more information on safe turkey tips, visit the KDHE Bureau of Consumer Health Web site and click on the [safe turkey tips link](#).